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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 COLOMBO 001112

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/INS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: NORWEGIAN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER ON JOINT

MECHANISM: PRESIDENT WANTS ME OUT OF TOWN WHEN IT IS

SIGNED, AND SHE WANTS ME TO LEAVE TOMORROW

REF: COLOMBO 1088 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: AMB. JEFFREY J. LUNSTEAD. REASON: 1.4 (B,D).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen told donors on June 23 that the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) will sign a controversial agreement to coordinate tsunami aid with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) early June 24. The so-called "joint mechanism" agreement is also expected to be tabled in Parliament for debate as an adjournment motion later the same day, according to Majority Leader Maitripala Sirisena. No changes will be made to the text to satisfy Muslim demands for greater representation. The Norwegians are focusing now on implementation of the agreement and on strengthening the ceasefire. The World Bank is ready to implement the Joint Mechanism-linked Trust Fund quickly. The Sinhalese nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP), which left the government alliance on June 16 over disagreement on the joint mechanism, has threatened an islandwide walk-out by its unions to protest the agreement on June 24. End summary.

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NORWEGIAN SAYS TSUNAMI AID AGREEMENT  
TO BE SIGNED ON JUNE 24  
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2. (C) Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Vidar Helgesen briefed the donor community on June 23, as he neared the conclusion of his visit to Sri Lanka. Helgesen said President Chandrika Kumaratunga "will sign" the so-called "joint mechanism" agreement to coordinate tsunami relief with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). He did not specify a date before the large donor group, saying only that the two sides were "very close to signature." In private conversation with the Ambassador after the larger meeting, however, Helgesen said that "the President wants to sign after I have left the country, and she wants me to leave tonight." He then confirmed that the joint mechanism should be signed on June 24. Relief, Reconstruction and Rehabilitation Director General Harim Peiris will sign for the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL); Norwegian Ambassador Brattskar will then carry a copy of the agreement to Kilinochchi for the LTTE signature.

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NO CHANGES FOR MUSLIMS  
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3. (C) Helgesen confirmed that he had a stormy session with Sri Lanka Muslim Congress (SLMC) leader Rauff Hakeem, who wanted to renegotiate parts of the agreement to give Muslims a greater voice. Helgesen told him that was not possible. Helgesen told donors the important thing for Muslims would be to decide on their representatives for the various committees, and that the GSL and the LTTE have already been thinking about their representatives.

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NOW COMES THE HARD PART  
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4. (C) In general, Helgesen said, the focus now needs to be on implementation of the agreement. We need to avoid the situation which developed after the signing of the Ceasefire Agreement, when the two sides agreed to set up a "Subcommittee on Immediate Humanitarian Needs" (SIHRN), only to see that commitment collapse amidst bureaucratic bickering, he said. The objective now will be to get "quick funding for quick projects."

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COMMON FUND READY TO GO  
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5. (C) In line with this, World Bank Director Peter Harrold said at the same gathering that although the Bank has not yet been formally requested by both sides to set up a Common Fund, it has prepared all of the paperwork. In fact, the EC

and Australia have already indicated that they have monies ready to contribute to the Fund. With regard to non-Fund monies, the role of the joint mechanism will be largely to decide on priorities for funding. It was noted that most donor and NGO funds are already committed and MOUs signed, so incremental funds to be apportioned through the mechanism will be limited.

16. (C) Helgesen said that besides implementation of the joint mechanism, the focus now needs to be on strengthening the ceasefire. The joint mechanism and the ceasefire can be synergistic; an efficient joint mechanism can strengthen the ceasefire and vice versa. The converse also holds--if the joint mechanism flops, the ceasefire will come under more pressure, and if the ceasefire is violated, it will be more difficult to implement the joint mechanism. Helgesen added that he had raised the issue of ceasefire violations with the LTTE during his visit to Kilinochchi on June 22.

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PUTTING THE MECHANISM IN (AS A ) MOTION  
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17. (U) Responding to a question posed by Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) MP Wimal Weerawansa in Parliament on June 23, Leader of the House and River Basin Development Minister Maitripala Sirisena said that the government will bring the joint mechanism as an adjournment motion for debate in Parliament on June 24. (Note: There is no vote on an adjournment motion.) Sirisena reportedly sidestepped a direct follow-up question from Weerawansa on whether the joint mechanism would be signed before, during or after the debate in Parliament, responding only that the agreement "might be" signed at some point on June 24. Trade Minister Jeyaraj Fenandopoulle offered no greater illumination on the subject when he interjected that all details would be revealed to Parliament on June 24. (Note: The pro-LTTE Tamil National Alliance, as well as the United National Party, the main opposition party, have urged the government not to bring the agreement to Parliament for debate before signing it. End note.)

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JVP TO CALL OUT UNIONS,  
RAISE BLACK FLAGS  
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18. (SBU) According to JVP sources, the party is planning an islandwide walk-out of all its affiliated trade and labor unions in the private and public sectors on June 24 to protest the joint mechanism. Affected sectors could include petroleum, electricity, the postal system, railways, and buses, among others. Union members aligned with the Marxist nationalist party, which quit its alliance with the government on June 16 to protest the joint mechanism, are being asked to raise black flags to signal opposition to the proposed agreement.

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COMMENT  
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19. (C) Things could still fall apart, but absent some cataclysmic change, the joint mechanism will finally be signed on June 24. Helgesen is exactly right; the tough part will be in getting the mechanism to work. The two sides are like an engaged couple--focusing on the wedding day and forgetting that they have to live together afterwards. Nonetheless, if all goes as planned, June 24 will be a momentous day. The joint mechanism will be the first agreement of any sort that President Kumaratunga, who ran for office 11 years ago as the peace candidate, will have signed with the LTTE. Now if she can only make it work.  
LUNSTEAD